

Montana Adult Basic and Literacy Education Funding

- ❖ The new formula counts poverty and unemployment as raw numbers, not percentages. This is inconsistent with any other accepted measure of capturing those rates; and it clearly paints an inaccurate picture of poverty and unemployment in Montana. (Missoula and Billings obviously do not have the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the state, as the new formula incorrectly indicates). The new funding formula is biased, inequitable and diverts funding away from populations in the state that are most in need of ABLE services.
- ❖ The Performance-Based funding (PBF) Task Force did not have equal representation from all types of providers in the state. There were no representatives from Tribal ABLE programs or Tribal communities; and the PBF Task Force was over-represented by members of large, school-district based programs.
- ❖ The formula assumes all programs are on a level playing field, but they are not. Some programs have access to substantial amounts of additional funding and resources that they can levy toward ABLE services (such as permissive mills for Adult Education that school-district based programs can collect). The cost of providing services in rural, geographically-isolated areas is greater (on a cost per student basis) than the cost of providing services in a more urban setting with a centralized population.
- ❖ The new formula does not provide for sustainability to the current network of ABLE providers in the state; and most notably, the new funding model was a direct threat to the only two remaining Tribal ABLE programs – Salish Kootenai College and Chief Dull Knife College. There was no hold harmless clause that limited the amount a program could lose (or gain) from year to year. Twelve of the current nineteen programs (as of March of 2012) experienced funding cuts under the new formula, with seven of those suffering substantial cuts of 20% or more from their previous year's funding, including Chief Dull Knife and Salish Kootenai College. This, while two programs received increases in their funds of more than 100% (133% and 317%, respectively).
- ❖ Compounding the access issues created by the funding formula, concerns were also expressed about the inflexible nature of current state and federal policies that force a one-size-fits-all approach to program design, while requiring projects to devote an inordinate amount of time and resources to the data management and administrative functions required by the current.
- ❖ According to the Montana Office of Public Instruction website, as of May 2013, there are no Montana ABLE funds at any tribal college or on any reservation in Montana.